The Effect of Sponsoring Sport Events on Sponsor Brand Image

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ABSTRACT:

Sports events sponsorship is one of the important marketing communications tools used by brands today, as it allows the sponsor to connect its brand name and image, with the name and image of an event that a consumer is interested in .It also gives the sponsor the opportunity to advertise and express its personality and connect with the consumer on an emotional level through that event. Sports events attract sponsors due to their popularity, as they appeal to millions of fans worldwide regardless of their differences. The field of sports is also no longer merely a means of entertainment, as it has turned into a huge a multibillion dollar industry.The objective of this paper is to investigate in whether sponsoring sports events effects creating and enhancing brand image. Using a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. Investigating in the following points: How does sponsoring sports events contribute in creating and enhancing brand image? What are the criteria of choosing the appropriate event to sponsor? How can the sports event venue environment be used to connect and create bonds with the consumer? The researcher has concluded that the positive connections formed between the sponsor brand image and the image of the event, helps forming positive bonds between the brand and the consumer. In addition to that the sponsorship program should be connected to the holistic Integrated Marketing and Communications activities of the brand through various media, as that helps forming a consistent image of the sponsor in the consumer's mind

KEY WORDS: Brand-Brand Image- Sponsorship - Sports Events Sponsorship

1. INTRODUCTION

Sports fans all over the world enjoy watching sports competitions and cheering teams and players that belong to their countries, or reflect their values and beliefs and escape the stress of their daily lives. Sports events have both commercial and entertaining aspects. As players have become celebrities having thousands of fans worldwide, different entities compete to win broadcasting rights of the events and brands rush to win sponsorship deals that offer them the opportunity to raise brand awareness and connect with their consumers

2. OVERVIEW AND BACKGROUND

2.1   Theoretical Framework:

The Global Sport Market

Sports has become a global industry as a large network of brands and entities offer products and services to support and serve players, organizational committees and fans. Also many other fields benefit from these events like hotels, transportation, restaurants, the construction sector... The Sports economy makes revenues through four main channels; gate revenues, merchandising, sponsorship and broadcasting and TV rights.

Sports Events Sponsorship

Sponsoring an event means that the brand offers the organizational committee of the event the necessary monetary funds and other products or services that can help stage the event, in return the brand receives media coverage during the broadcasting of the event, in addition to other marketing opportunities that can help the brand connect with the consumer through relationship marketing and emotional branding tactics.

Sponsor Brand Image

Brand Image is the impression formed in the consumers' mind of a brand's total personality (real and imaginary qualities and shortcomings), which is developed over time through various marketing communications efforts and is authenticated through the consumers' direct experience. It also effects consumer's feelings towards the brand and his purchasing decisions. The sponsor's image and identity is linked to that of the sponsored event, as both their logos appear together in various communication forms. If the consumer is satisfied with the sponsor's attitude towards the sports event, the positive image of the event is then transferred to the sponsor.

Sports Events Sponsorship objectives

Brands might chose to sponsor certain events in order to achieve objectives such as raising brand awareness, creating and enhancing brand image, increasing sales, competition and addressing new target markets

Choosing the appropriate event to sponsor

Brands chose which events to sponsor based on the scope of sponsorship (sponsoring a player, team, league or event), degree of sponsorship (full sponsorship, main sponsorship, co-sponsorship), size of the sports event (Global, International, National, Regional or Local event), consumer appeal (choosing the event that is relevant to target consumer interests) and the available budget (which is usually part of the total marketing budget of the brand)

Implementing the sponsorship program

Implementing the sponsorship program entails choosing strategic locations to place the sponsors' logos such as the areas surrounding the fields or tracks, on the equipment used in the competition, on the score boards…In addition to creating memorable brand experiences through the appropriate marketing and communication tools available like booths, P.O.P, giveaways, mobile applications and technologies such as augmented reality ….

Evaluating the sponsorship program
Evaluating the sponsorship program could happen through two methods. Exposure Methods (measuring the amount of media broadcasting of the event, to estimate the number of people that have watched it and have been exposed to the sponsoring brand advertising messages). In addition to Tracking methods (to help identify the consumers' perception of the brand resulting from the sponsorship program, through various tools like surveys and other means of tracking their contributions on different social media platforms).

2.2   Analytical study
An analytical study was performed on McDonald's sponsorship of the 2016 Olympic Games held in Rio. The brand was the part of the TOP Olympic sponsors program as the official restaurant of the games, meaning that it had exclusive rights in its sector to establish restaurants in the sports venues. Sponsoring such a global event helps increase brand awareness, enhances brand image, and increases sales .McDonald's logo appeared next to the Olympic rings in most marketing communication. The brand also created a special experience for 100 children that were chosen from all over the word to walk by the flag bearer in the Nations' Parade in the opening ceremony and enjoy other Olympic events. However, the brand and organizational committee of the games were criticized that brands offering junk food like McDonalds and Coca-Cola should not be sponsoring such global sports events or asked to adjust their menus and serve health food.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT
The research Investigates in the following points: How does sponsoring sports events contribute in creating and enhancing brand image and increase brand awareness? What is the criteria of choosing the appropriate event to sponsor? How can the sports event venue environment be used to create bonds between the sponsor and the consumer?

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES
The objective of this paper is to investigate whether sponsoring sports events has an effect in creating and enhancing brand image.

5. HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGIES
The research uses a mixture of qualitative and qualitative research methods.
It is hypothesized that sponsoring sports events increases brand awareness of the sponsor and enhances its image. In addition to that connecting the brand name and image with the event's name and image could increases the emotional bonds between the brand and the consumer and that these emotional bonds could help the consumer make purchasing decisions in favour of the sponsor.

.6. CONCLUSIONS
 The researcher has concluded that sponsoring sports events connects the image and identity of the sponsoring brand with that of the event and increases its brand awareness. Also, choosing the appropriate event for the sponsor helps create emotional bonds between the brand and the consumer. In addition to that implementing a sponsorship program entails

placing the sponsor logo in strategic locations with high visibility, and the use of appropriate marketing and communication means available in the sport venue, to create special brand experiences for the consumer. Sponsorship program should also be connected to the brand's IMC activities to maintain a consistent brand image across all touch points.

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